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# MEASUREMENTS AND STANDARDS: POLITICAL TECHNOLOGIES IN AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

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## MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS AND POLICIES IN AFRICA

LYDIE CABANE  
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### ABSTRACT

Measurement instruments are increasingly important in the contemporary government of African. They are central to the rise of economic performance as a tool for reforming development aid and states. This has led to the emergence of new intervention methods (including experimentation and quantification) and generated political reconfigurations. These tools mobilise specific knowledge and experts, and put states in ambiguous positions. States must respect the technical infrastructure of international interventions, but they are also able to manoeuvre into favourable positions, especially with respect to their populations. Instruments also make “infiltration” possible: international donors no longer impose conditions from the outside, but prefer to act from within African states through techniques, measurements, standards, evaluation tools and specific terminology.

**Keywords:** Africa, technologies, government, international, policies, measurements, standards.

### INTRODUCTION

Technical standards, tools, expertise and knowledge are central sites of policy making in Africa, and used by governments, NGOs, international organisations and transnational experts alike (including those of African origin). Evaluating and measuring population categories, health, education, trade, the environment and even governments have become essential steps in implementing effective

governance practices, where governance is understood as the capacity of government to steer society (Foucault, 1993, 2004). These instruments accompany a “good governance” discourse, which is no longer employed solely by large international institutions (Abrahamsen, 2000) but also by African actors who produce their own rules and data (for example, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance). African states use measurement technologies and instruments to facilitate the calculability of daily life, water, electricity and public services, creating an environment that favours “calculative citizens” (Von Schnitzler, 2008). Current measurement initiatives, techniques, knowledge and expertise are therefore important when studying political reconfigurations in Africa and the ordering of society as based on local entanglements. This special issue investigates the extent to which the repetition and circulation of routinised interventions – involving expert techniques that range from random evaluations, guidelines, rankings and benchmarks to clinical trials, roadmaps and indicators – result in political reconfigurations. It explores the ways these interventions make Africa a “living laboratory” (Tilley, 2011) and build its future.

African economic development, the neoliberal governmentality, foreign interventions in the development field and public policies are increasingly based on technical infrastructure, knowledge, expertise and measurements. However, the nature of these tools and their political implications for contemporary Africa have not been sufficiently studied by social scientists. Analyses of public action in Africa have increased in frequency over the past ten years, leading to renewed analysis of African politics (Eboko, 2015; Darbon, 2004). However, recent papers have focused very little or not at all on instruments of public action (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2005). Few studies have looked into the roles played by models, techniques, knowledge and experts in contemporary Africa, despite these being central to international interventions and public action on the continent. These tools have been partially studied from the public policy transfer angle (Darbon, 2009), but this approach ignores the importance of knowledge, its circulation and its effects. International actors’ power relationships and intervention methods are often examined through the prisms of extraversion and assemblages of actors (Pommerolle, 2010; Bayart, 1999). They rarely take into account the technical and cognitive dimensions of these interventions, or the limitations of tools supporting these actions. For this reason, it is interesting to shift the focus away from states onto the instruments that govern lives, populations and their environments. This would shed light on knowledge production and use in the globalised context (Rottenburg, 2009a).

The presence of these tools is nothing new. For many years, historians have underlined the importance of science, experts and techniques in building colonial and postcolonial government capacity (Cooper and Packard, 1998; Bonneuil, 2000). Several recent papers have offered more nuanced views, “reconsidering expertise” (Beinart, Brown, and Gilfoyle, 2009) to show that Western knowledge and techniques have not only been imposed but also negotiated with and adapted for African intermediaries (Tilley and Gordon,

2010; Tilley, 2011). However, this focus on knowledge, science and techniques has had little impact on studies of contemporary Africa, despite being an ideal approach to observing and analysing the dynamics of globalisation and the transformation of states. Studies on science and techniques – which have been growing over the past two decades (Bonneuil and Joly, 2013) – have had little effect on contemporary French analyses of policy production in Africa, with the exception of the health field. In recent years, there have been several international initiatives, including debates in journals such as *Social Studies of Science* (Anderson, 2002) and *Postcolonial Studies* (Anderson, 2009; Rottenburg, 2009a), as well as the creation of the “STS-Africa” network.<sup>1</sup> This growing interest is welcomed. However, it is unfortunate that, like the science and technology studies approach these researches are often influenced by (Latour, 1986), these publications have missed the opportunity to engage with African studies on states and politics and give their analyses political depth. An excellent counter-example is Gabrielle Hecht’s work on uranium and the nuclear industry in Africa (2013). She clearly situates mines, nuclear techniques and nuclear experts with respect to a long colonial and postcolonial history.

Taking these new developments into account, this issue calls for more systematic dialogue between anthropologists, STS researchers, political scientists and specialists in African studies. It is based on two hypotheses. Firstly, focusing on the technical, cognitive and scientific dimensions of public action in Africa sheds new light on political production. Secondly, and this is the basis for the articles in this issue, public action techniques and instruments constitute original sites of production for politics in Africa. These tools are influenced by the restructuring of international actors’ intervention methods. They are used in new forms of public management, reforms of the development aid, global governance, neoliberal globalisation and modifications to the models and knowledge underlying interventions, regardless of whether they stem from economics, health research or environmental fields. These tools and measurements offer new ways of observing reconfigurations of the ways of governing in Africa.

To address these issues, we have adopted an empirical and comparative approach. The articles presented here address different measurement and evaluation tools, in different sectors (health, food, education and the environment) and countries (Tanzania, Kenya, Benin, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Malawi and Western Africa). The articles are all based on original qualitative data produced during long-term field studies, often spanning multiple sites. Such studies precisely enable analysing the standardisation processes and logic underlying the international negotiations central to the “manufacturing” of categories, procedures and statistics. This type of approach is a good way of observing how actors appropriate standardised instruments and procedures. Appropriation is a twofold process (De Bruijn, 2009): actors’ practices and administrative procedures within states are transformed by

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1 <http://www.sts-africa.org/>

instruments, and these instruments are in turn redefined by actors' practices. During a long-term field study, Sarah Fichtner observed the creation and adaptation of school statistics during the school year at a rural school in Benin. In another long-term study, Pierre-Marie David evaluated the effects of introducing performance measurement tools in a HIV/AIDS programmes in the Central African Republic. Aurore Viard-Crétat's multi-site field study made it possible to analyse the transnational decision-making processes that lead to state reforms, based on Cameroon's application to REDD+, an international programme to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. In another multi-site study, Lise Cornilleau focused on the effects of global food modelling on food policies in Malawi. The articles adopt multiple perspectives in order to better describe the influence and extent of the transnational networks, models and experts operating within states. This leads to forms of political infiltration through public health policies in Tanzania (Moritz Hunsmann) or technologies evaluating drug quality in Kenya (Mathieu Quet). The articles also reveal the scope of these instruments, which circulate in international spheres of expertise (Cornilleau), national political arenas (Quet, Hunsmann, Viard-Crétat) and daily life at a micro-level (Fichtner). By using archives and historical analysis, Samuel Pinaud is able to situate these processes in time and to show that, in the case of policies against "nutritional poverty" in French-speaking Africa, expert knowledge has underpinned policies for the past hundred years.

## **MEASUREMENT AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT**

Several years ago, Richard Rottenburg noted that "new entanglements of science and politics in African contexts [...] are related to new global developments in the areas of economy, law, politics and epistemology" (2009a). The realisation that models, standards and measurements played a growing role in African government originated in studies dealing with biomedicine and health. This reflected the huge investments and importance of this sector for international actors, given the rising significance of global health (Geissler, Rottenburg, and Zenker 2012; Crane 2013; Atlani-Duault and Vidal 2013). To explain the role of science, techniques and economics in African government, Rottenburg identified several factors: neoliberal forms of governance, the privatisation of science, scepticism concerning human progress, and the growing importance of human rights and human security (2009a). The articles in this issue were written with this in mind, but do not adhere completely to this framework. As we will note throughout this introduction, several criticisms can be formulated. One of the aims of this issue was to widen the analysis begun in biomedical and health studies to

cover other sectors, including the environment, education and development. To do so, we have chosen four cross-disciplinary themes: the international context, experimentality as a method of action in all spheres of public action, quantification from global models to local figures, and the focus on the performance of states. These tools and actors reveal a focus on performance, a characteristic resulting from the governance context and neoliberal globalisation movement that began in the 2000s. Tools and actors work with and within states, rather than bypassing them (as was previously the case). This results in a new political configuration, where international models and actors infiltrate states.

### ***A new international context: the power of expertise and mastery of measurement***

These pioneering biomedical studies have shown the hegemony of international actors, who collect information, produce orientations and rules, and finance development. Only these international actors can claim to have comprehensive scientific knowledge of international health, allowing them to systematise actions, produce data and establish diagnoses. They then develop options based on rules that have been constructed as universally applicable referents. They only finance projects once these referents have been accepted, which allows them to reinforce their own legitimacy and consolidate their hegemony. (Darbon, 2003; Campbell, Cornish et al., 2012). Faced with these giants, most leaders have failed to provide citizens with reliable administrative services. Unable to mobilise sufficient support within their own population or reclaim political legitimacy, they are generally unable to contest the rules and options put forward (Darbon, 2003).

These actors and the power they wield are the focus of Pierre-Marie David's article on performance measurement in anti-AIDS programmes in the Central African Republic. Most antiretroviral (ARV) drugs are provided and distributed through programmes launched by large international donors, who have virtually replaced the Ministry of Health. These programmes rely on an artillery of performance and effectiveness measurements, resulting in a new order of priorities. The standardisation of effectiveness measurements for ARV programmes is typical of a scriptural economy where local meets global. Graphic artefacts (Hull 2012) are put to work in spaces where "the parable of development aid" is written (Rottenburg, 2009b).

### ***From humanitarian experiments to the laboratization of African government***

Another common feature of these articles is the experimental nature of interventions in the contexts studied. Several anthropological papers have underlined the connection between new forms of domination in Africa and the



“states of exception” justified by emergency health and humanitarian situations (Rottenburg, 2009a; Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010), which warrant political, medical and health experiments (Nguyen, 2005). However, we must also look beyond emergency situations and humanitarian crises to see the political methods in normal transnational configurations and daily life in states and societies. With a few exceptions (Chabrol, 2014), biomedical and global health studies rarely focus on states or what is at stake inside and around states, in terms of new assemblages of actors or processes rendering people, places and spaces (in) visible (Brown, Craddock *et al.*, 2012).

Unlike Adriana Petryna’s work on the globalisation of clinical trials (2009) or Vinh-Kim Nguyen’s work on biomedical interventions in AIDS-affected countries (2010), the articles here deal with interventions that take place around, within or in collaboration with states, instead of bypassing them. By focusing on measurements, standards and tools, the articles examine circulation between global spheres and states and the resulting political configurations. Moritz Hunsmann’s article on the DFID’s political experiments in Tanzania is exemplary in this respect. Instead of intervening directly to promote specific approaches, donors prefer to test new, tailored interventions that are based on infiltrating the local context, using social sciences analyses to help them make sense of the policy process. Furthermore, these experiments extend beyond the biomedical and health fields: they constitute a generalised political intervention method, often used by “randomistas” – economists who, following Esther Duflo and her team at MIT, evaluate interventions like clinical trials in order to make them replicable (Jatteau, 2014), especially in the education field (Languille, 2014). It is tempting to draw comparisons with Helen Tilley’s “Africa as a living laboratory”: scientific research and investigations are both scientific and political experiments, foreshadowing the political reconfigurations resulting from decolonisation. While the political context is very different, this analysis suggests that these interventions play a role in major political transformations. In these approaches, the experimental process involves an armada of figures, terminologies, models and tools to – paradoxically – make these interventions replicable, undermining their claims of contextualisation.

### ***Quantification, from global models to local use***

The articles address actions on the global scale (the international models and actors studied by Lise Cornilleau, Aurore Viard-Crétat and Pierre-Marie David), national scale (the production of policies based on international rules and standards examined by Mathieu Quet) and local scale (Sarah Fichtner). They show the extent to which figures and calculations penetrate and redefine all aspects of everyday bureaucracy and government (Hibou, 2012). Figures are central to policy production and the governance of public services, as seen in Moritz Hunsmann’s analysis of Evidence for Action’s strategy and Sarah Fichtner’s ethnography of the production of school statistics.



On the global level, the connection between neoliberal governance and the rise of measurement models and instruments is clearly visible in Lise Cornilleau's article. She describes modelling as a "multi-scale technology" used to govern the food field. Her analysis focuses on the IMPACT model, which was developed by the international research institute IFPRI to evaluate "food security", and the circulation of this model. As Cornilleau underlines, the model plays a key role in promoting agricultural policies that support market liberalisation and national policy reform in Malawi. Global models can be found to different extents in other fields such as education, agriculture, health and the environment. Evaluations and measurements are therefore closely linked with neoliberal globalisation and increasingly interconnected markets. In other words, figures support a neo-managerial political project for state reform (Bruno and Didier, 2013).

While quantification is part of a problem's qualification, the production of figures involves negotiations on several levels (international, national and local). The negotiation process is largely dependent on infrastructure, actors' perceptions of issues, and the way these issues are included in actors' agendas. Sarah Fichtner's article on the production of school roll statistics in Benin is illustrative in this respect. School rolls are instruments used by states to evaluate needs in terms of human resources, operating budgets, equipment, etc. However, rolls are also used in performance evaluation and therefore advocacy during negotiations between states and partners to provide or increase aid. In this context, statistical production is not just an activity summarising real figures for information purposes. It is a local governance tool; a political technology used by actors to justify their actions and build reputations that lead to future career opportunities. Figures become a resource that actors use to generate a positive image of the school, its development and its governance. Even though these figures may only offer a distant or non-representative vision of reality, they still have a real impact on the local level. They affect the allocation of financial and human resources, and influence individual trajectories through recruitment processes for teachers and students. This game of snakes and ladders alternates between a real and an imaginary school, which interact constantly as part of a mutual construction process. The international production of evaluation tools for educational performance affects practices on the state and local levels. But instruments must be adapted to local contexts to make comparisons possible and ensure resources and funds for school operations are appropriately allocated. International evaluation instruments reflect this imaginary school; local adjustments made at real schools lead to changes in instruments and the vision of the imaginary school.

### ***"Performance" and "effectiveness" in states: a new neoliberal post-Washington Consensus***

This game of snakes and ladders also involves the production of knowledge, instruments and graphic artefacts (Hull 2012) that seek to attribute

responsibility to states by evaluating programme performance and governance systems. This method of acting on, with and within states is characteristic of transformations affecting development aid and the global governance system. The reconfigurations that these tools reveal suggest a new context is emerging in the wake of the Washington Consensus. In the 1980s and 1990s, foreign interventions bypassed states with little regard for political legitimacy. Structural adjustment plans sought to constantly minimise the roles played by states which, in Africa, were considered “fragile”, corrupt and even “bankrupt”. The dramatic reduction in state capacity had serious consequences for citizens (life expectancy dropped after health systems collapsed), meaning that these strategies ultimately failed. Learning (partially) from their errors, donors adapted their intervention methods to focus on strengthening state capacity and expertise. However, this did not signify a return to “developmental” beliefs, where the well-being of populations was a goal in itself, but the enhancing and resurgence of neoliberal strategies. These strategies no longer bypass states but aim to model their conduct on new forms of public management (Bezes, 2007), making them independent and effective.

These new intervention methods are partly based on development aid reforms implemented in the 2000s. The first was the Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted in 2000 and set precise, numerical and measurable objectives for the entire international community. States, NGOs and international organisations adopted these goals and measurements to show donors that their activities respected international rules and met programme performance standards. The second was the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, adopted by the OECD in 2004. This declaration helped spread the principles of results-based management and aid “appropriation” by beneficiaries (Bergamaschi, Diabaté and Paul, 2008). Viard-Crétat’s article on REDD+ negotiations shows how these programmes enlist states through an appropriation discourse that involves them setting aside considerable domestic capacity and bureaucratic resources to meet donor requirements. It also highlights the way the World Bank allocates funds to states (here, Cameroon), threatening their independence by forcing them to comply with international management practices and performance standards.

## **INFILTRATION: A NEW FORM OF MULTI-SCALE, TRANSVERSAL AND TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Another key characteristic of these new international intervention methods is that they no longer necessarily rely on direct actions or public policy transfers (Darbon, 2009). Instead, they involve discreet and indirect operations in the corridors of power, through tools that are often used by third parties (consultants,

experts, scientists, etc.). This circulation of measurement, instruments and standards is often connected with political and institutional contexts in states. Consequently, the political significance of these transformations is specific to each state. This can create problems: these infiltrations displace power, and take place surreptitiously, out of the public eye. Measurements, standards and tools are one way of analysing circulation between global spheres and states, revealing the different forms of reasoning at work. The articles by Moritz Hunsmann, Mathieu Quet and Aurore Viard-Crétat offer a nuanced view of the situation in the field and actors' daily lives. By focusing on negotiations between states and international actors, they show the ways in which states are constructed and societies controlled.

### ***Surreptitious policies***

During the 1990s, foreign interventions were “depoliticised” and based on technical criteria managed by international actors, bypassing local powers (Ferguson, 1990). Contemporary intervention methods still have a technical focus but take into account institutions and the political context. Actions are seen as being more effective when adapted to the local context. Moritz Hunsmann's article is a clear illustration of this idea. He studies an experimental project, E4A (Evidence for Action), promoted by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). This project seeks to identify the reasons why maternal and neonatal mortality are not made visible, so it can engage in evidence-based advocacy. Here, the issue is voluntarily politicised, on the basis of the argument that health actions are a key element of a country's political economy. It is no longer a question of refusing politics to dominate through techniques, but of politicising health problems. The aim is to encourage political commitments to fight maternal mortality through movements on different scales (local, national and international). Evidence is produced as part of a constant process that involves collecting and summarising data at the international level; establishing good governance and performance indicators to evaluate, compare and promote “effective” actions and experiments. Hunsmann's admirable analysis shows the ambiguous and particularly invasive effects of this project, which reveals a new method of social engineering.

This politicised action on different scales allows E4A to increase the visibility of a health problem while working in local contexts (here, its Tanzanian site). The term infiltration in the sense of moving skillfully across the interstices and gaps of a system is quite relevant to describe this kind of intervention, which penetrates state and non-state structures involved in different aspects of the problem. The intervention does not attempt to create new activities (as do many development programmes), but to latch onto existing activities, without seeking to be a leader. By subtly voicing opinions and supporting activities launched by local actors, the managers of the Tanzanian E4A programme establish themselves as holders of knowledge and therefore key players in issues related to maternal mortality.

E4A's strategy of communicating and broadcasting scientific data and good practices, allows it to claim a position as an actor capable of summarising and providing knowledge to increase visibility of the problem. In the same way, E4A gradually identifies those who will solve this problem, defining their respective roles and power. Slowly but surely, it comes to occupy a central position in Tanzanian public health policy, without local actors being clearly informed that this organisation is an offshoot of the DFID.

Standardisation is often seen as a way for donors to depoliticise their actions and better establish their authority. However, evaluation and decision-making processes based on standardisation can only operate when they are politicised and play "*jeux d'intelligence*" (Viard-Crétat) and temporary convergences of interests. Ultimately, these processes can be reduced to strategies used by actors when playing with instruments, procedures and graphical artefacts within specific scriptural economies. Decision-making sites are not illusory decision-making centres (Bayart, 1999), but spaces where constantly shifting issues incessantly modify the object being discussed and decided on.

### ***Instruments and definitions: key aspects of public action in African states***

As Hunsmann's analysis of E4A shows, before a problem can be dealt with, it must be define and solutions suggested. The structure of a problem and the structure of power are two sides of the same coin (Reverdy, 2013). Formulating a problem and suggesting solutions involve reassigning actors and redistributing power. Consequently, defining problems can be a key resource when negotiating and positioning actors in a specific field. This explains why there is no easy consensus when determining whether a situation is problematic or defining what constitutes a "problem".

The embedded interests at work are clearly visible in the progressive construction of the "fake medicine" problem in the drug safety field. Mathieu Quet's article shows how different ways of formulating problems lead to different types of intervention, which require the repositioning of actors. For example, if the issue is drug authenticity, markets must be standardised and medicines categorised as either marketable products or products that must not circulate. The focus is on regulating pharmaceutical policies. If the problem is seen as one of counterfeiting, the (negative) role of foreign producers is underlined. Finally, if the issue is illicit drugs (as it is today), the problem becomes defining the drug rather than adapting pharmaceutical policy. This way of formulating the problem is central to major changes in the pharmaceutical innovation, production and distribution fields, including the appearance of new actors (especially Brazil, India and China), differentiation strategies implemented by hegemonic firms and debates on intellectual property. The current formulation of the problem has led to a rise in testing and authentication technologies, which are only partially effective due to their cost and/or the lack of technical

resources required for optimal operation. Nevertheless, because they build on contemporary safety policies, and because they are promoted by the same actors who fuel the counterfeiting discourse, they are not questioned. This gives rise to a stabilisation rather than a redistribution of actors, or changes in power relationships. Suggested solutions contribute to drug safety (by monitoring flows), but do not solve the initial problem – generic product quality.

Samuel Pinaud's article on the management of nutritional poverty in Western Africa shows how qualifying a problem can result in the redistribution of actors and reconfiguration of power relationships. Pinaud describes the gradual implementation of a process quantifying nutritional needs, which leads to the humanitarianisation of nutritional poverty. During this process, African populations change status: instead of being seen as colonised groups with specific nutritional practices, they come to be viewed as individuals suffering chronic malnutrition. Similarly, milk – the solution to the problem as it is formulated – is no longer seen as a luxury product, associated with urban civilisation, but a medicine meeting specific nutritional needs and essential for the development of healthy bodies, which become political objects. When the problem is quantified, the extent of nutritional needs is revealed (half of the global milk production would be required to meet these needs). In addition, supplying populations with milk products raises sanitation issues, as milk can quickly become toxic. To ensure these products are distributed safely, selection takes place<sup>2</sup>. The most vulnerable members of vulnerable populations are identified, and those who can be given milk safely are separated from those who can wait – « *faire vivre et laisser mourir* », (Foucault, 1997, p. 214). Individuals already receiving medical treatment are given priority. Nutritional needs are medicalised and medical professionals ensure these needs are met, thus taking control of an action that was originally a development initiative.

### ***Expertise and independence***

As seen in the articles presented here, programmes are part of a scriptural economy (De Certeau, 1990). The procedures they impose curb states' independence, allowing donors to maintain control over interventions (see Hunsmann, Viard-Crétat and Quet). The scriptural economy relies on graphic artefacts (Hull, 2012) and formalised writing practices, forcing states to come to terms with semantic fields, acronyms, specific technical expressions and other elements that are implicit in international standardisation processes. In some cases, states must hire experts capable of translating projects with respect to applicable international rules (Viard-Crétat). Although states are said to be independent, the scriptural economy ensures donors maintain considerable power. States construct independence by appropriating these procedures and

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2 This is reminiscent of early HIV treatment programmes in Africa, when patients were selected before being given drugs – to some extent, selected to live or die (Nguyen, 2005).

making them work to their advantage, furthering their own interests. While this bypassing of procedures can block decision-making and foster tensions, it also creates untenable situations for powerful organisations. In Viard-Crétat's article, the World Bank is forced to revise the representations it embodies and accept questionable practices to ensure its programme functions correctly.

Issues and power struggles change constantly as a result of writing processes, evaluation tools and decision-making procedures. This shows the performative capacity of instruments and graphic artefacts (Hull, 2012) used in these decision-making areas, whether real or illusory. In this situation, mastering one specific file is insufficient to make expertise legitimate (Viard-Crétat, Hunsmann). Expertise is made effective through mediation skills, diplomatic know-how, dialogue, conflict resolution, communication strategies and involvement in different types of local and international networks. Experts must know how to work around donors' constraints, unspoken rules, discourses and discursive practices to find allies and further their employers' interests.

Following decades of development projects, professional trajectories and profiles have emerged. There are now experts who master the mechanisms of international institutions and are able to work around them. These actors are similar to "development brokers" (Mosse, 2011; Bierschenk *et al.*, 2000), except that their position is more about having knowledge and international expertise than mastering informational resources and networks. These experts are like controllers (*aiguilleurs*), mastering information circuits, or "*marginaux secant*" (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), working in several institutions or possessing a professional and social network spanning several international institutions. However, bureaucratic procedures vary from one institution to the next depending on the subjects dealt with, changing form regularly. This gives rise to very specialised fields of expertise and a limited number of experts. Difficulties in finding experts may delay decision-making processes, exacerbating tensions within states and between states and partners. These tensions are what allow actors to further their own interests (Viard-Crétat).

### ***State strategies: between manoeuvring and affirmation***

All the articles here mention the importance and influence of the global context. However, they also reveal the political arrangements and entanglements that emerge, sometimes producing unexpected results. States develop their own reasoning: they are never passive or powerless recipients. While political and bureaucratic actors must accept many international recommendations, they also seek to affirm control over their territories, bureaucracies and populations, sometimes twisting the rules in their own favour.

The articles by Aurore Viard-Crétat and Sarah Fichtner show how states use the little leeway they have to appropriate instruments, working around institutions' standards, evaluation procedures and bureaucratic operating methods to further their own interests. Cameroon's candidature for REDD+ is



illustrative in this respect. As Viard-Crétat demonstrates, Cameroonian actors appropriate tools so well that they manage to make procedures work for them, thanks to their tacit knowledge of World Bank operations. This process highlights strategies that allow states to assert their independence despite the unequal balance of power. It also enables public powers that are heavily dependent on international aid and that have fragile relationships with civil society (Darbon, 2003) to bypass rules. They later use these rules to establish their national and international legitimacy and mobilise civil society which, despite not having the same agenda, ultimately benefits from funding. Meanwhile, the institution is trapped in its own game and can do nothing (officially) but approve the initiative, as part of an unusual decision-making process.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the focus on implementing tools and measuring performance raises questions about the resulting forms of policy and legitimacy. As Moritz Hunsmann suggests, these questions are not asked, because they are less visible than for direct humanitarian interventions. They arise, more perniciously, in the hushed atmospheres of ministers' offices and the hallways of international conferences, leading to political decisions that have not been democratically discussed. International actors have learnt lessons from direct interventions and past criticism. They now prefer forms of interventions that respect more the rules of the game on appearance, but that are no less insidious. They operate through the circulation of tools, knowledge, techniques and models that shape ideas at the heart of policy-making. As we have seen, states are far from passive: they play an active role in this process.

In this context, what does measurement mean? Who makes legitimate and democratic political decisions given that actors' preferences are invisibly influenced by international donors? What does evaluation mean when the question is about choosing programmes? Tools lead to a focus on measurement, but this focus is meaningless when it is no longer about resources but trumping policy aims. The insistence on economic effectiveness leads to a reversal of values. Economic performance in the fields of health, education and the environment becomes an aim in itself, and no longer a way of helping nations develop or increase their populations' well-being. As Sarah Fichtner writes, "basic universal education [is no longer] an aim in itself, a human right, but one of the key instruments and indicators for poverty reduction and economic development." This reversal is due to global paradigm shifts in development economics and the perverse effects of introducing measurement instruments based on neoliberal value systems. The focus is no longer on evaluating content but on evaluating performance, as disconnected from quality (David). This has consequences on health (Quet, David), food (Cornilleau) and well-being,



despite the inadequate figures on which these measurements are based. The authors in this issue all underline the cognitive uncertainty resulting from the contexts, resources and methods in these evaluations.

As Pierre-Marie David highlights, these new paradigms insist on measuring the measures implemented as part of international programmes, evaluating their performance and determining whether aims have been met, to the detriment of social justice. He states, “In fragile states like the Central African Republic, this management method has not only led to mediocre performance, it also reinforces the reality of this mediocrity. [...] The Central African Republic experience is a reminder that the subordination of economic and biopolitical organisation to social justice must be reconsidered.” Consequently, a detailed analysis of these instruments should also be seen as an opportunity to review the development principles at work and the political configurations that result from their use.

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